

# Officials encourage customers to support local PX

Consumers have the power to make products appear on local exchange shelves

Story and photo by

**Kristin Bradley**

*USAG Hohenfels Public Affairs*

Officials from U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels and the off-post community are urging Hohenfels customers to think before they shop and make purchases locally instead of traveling to other posts or shopping online so valuable services remain in both the on- and off-post communities.

According to Rebecca Spencer, manager of the Hohenfels Post Exchange, many customers travel to the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr PX to make routine purchases they could request from Hohenfels, a practice that could be keeping needed items off Hohenfels shelves.

Spencer said if a customer sees an item they like at the Grafenwoehr PX, instead of buying it there they should write down the item information and then fill out a form at the Hohenfels PX customer service desk requesting it be sent to Hohenfels.

"We can have anything sent from Graf, from perfume to TVs. Small, large, it doesn't matter," said Spencer.

Customers can even request something as simple as shampoo. Spencer said if a customer is looking for a specific item Hohenfels does not have, they can ask a customer service associate to see if it is available at Grafenwoehr and have it sent to Hohenfels.

Making purchases through the Hohenfels PX means when Army and Air Force Exchange Service officials make decisions about providing space and inventory, they can see what Hohenfels customers want and need, said Spencer.



**Soldiers shop for sporting goods at the U.S. Army Garrison Hohenfels PXtra. Garrison, Army and Air Force Exchange Service and local off-post officials said it is important for community members to shop locally to retain vital services.**

"If there is a steadily increasing trend they see it and do tend to react favorably to that," which could lead to the possibility of an increased product assortment or an increase in space, said Spencer.

"If people don't shop locally, we lose services. If they don't sell their inventory, we won't get new things we need," said Stacye Downing, director of USAG Hohenfels Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation.

In addition to providing retail services for the community, AAFES provides vital funding for Family and MWR programs, said Downing.

According to AAFES, roughly two-thirds of its earnings are paid to Family and MWR pro-

grams, a figure that exceeded \$260 million in 2009.

Still, AAFES needs the help of the community to continue to provide great services, said Spencer.

"If stores show increased traffic, it shows there is a growing need for services," Spencer said. "But when the theater runs a blockbuster movie and only four people go, they (AAFES officials) see that, too."

Spencer said she has known of underutilized stores or services that were shut down completely.

More store traffic and sales also means more personnel could possibly be hired, increasing

the number of jobs available in the community.

Garrison officials said while it is important to patronize local AAFES facilities when possible, some services are only available off post and for those it is equally important to shop locally.

According to Wolfgang Fruhmnn, an economic advisor working to promote regional development within Bavaria, local businesses such as restaurants, flower shops, electronic stores and more all benefit heavily from American customers.

"U.S. residents are for sure an important piece of the puzzle for local retailers," said Fruhmnn.

"The more business we can attract and keep in this area, the more it stabilizes our local retailer system," Fruhmnn said, so stores that provide valuable goods will be more likely to stay in the local community, ensuring the quality of life in the region remains high.

"We have good services here in Parsberg, Velburg, in the entire region. You don't have to go far for what you need and you save money by shopping locally instead of driving somewhere like Regensburg or Nuremberg," said Fruhmnn.

Fruhmnn said he admits the language barrier between American residents and local German businessmen can be challenging sometimes, but he said customers should tell retailers what they are looking for whenever possible.

"Tell them what you want, what you are looking for, what you are missing. After two or three times it gets noticed and a good businessman will find a solution," said Fruhmnn.

Not only does spending locally ensure retailers and services remain in the area, Fruhmnn said, but that money also ends up improving the quality of other services Americans use, like pools and parks.

"It is better for everyone when the local economy is healthy," said Fruhmnn.